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## Over the Nuts and Wine

By FRANCES COURTENAY BAYLOR

Religious Intuitions. This is the month of the Star of Bethlehem, from whom all order and religion worthy of the name comes, and it is interesting to look at some of the rays from "The Light of the World" that to millions of men, for thousands of years, have been all that they knew of God. There is the Rama of Oodipore. Hindus think him the descendant of a king, a "Vishnu" incarnation, whose memory is so sacred that the mere repetition of his name by a Hindu, or even his parrot, is an act of merit and purification. When a Hindu prince feels that he has lost caste, and been disgraced by marrying a daughter of the Emperor of Delhi, under compulsion, he has had recourse to the Rama. He is the highest Hindu—cheerful, young English officers of small imaginative and sympathetic power call him "their top man." No Hindu sovereign can be consecrated without his consent. Neither in European nor Asiatic politics is there any one who occupies his exact position, for he is not a pope, neither does he use all the powers of the Mikado, though like him, he represents the gods, Rama and Vishnu, and stands for their will. His succession has remained unbroken since 600 years B. C. The Pope is creation of yesterday, Alexander, of the day, the Bourbons, Guelfs, Ghibellines, Mahomedans, his parvenus, named with the Rama, who has ruled his tribe first at Lahore and then in Oodipore (11,000 square miles and only a million and a quarter people) from the time the world was young, when the solar race was possibly pure white—the Brahmins are our kinsmen, though they crossed their blood early; have survived Alexander, in whose time the world was probably old as the Celts are now; have defied the Mussulman Emperors with whose daughters they have intermarried; have outlived the Mahomedans, and expect to outlive the Barbarians—that is, the English—who for some mysterious purpose of the All-Wise, are permitted to make penknives and sell piece goods, and conquer the world. The next greatest Hindu, and the next oldest and highest in rank, is the ruler of Nepal, Jung Bahadur's nominal master, the one unchallenged king who has never yet submitted to any foreign rule, and the extinction of this house would be an insult to every Hindu, and their lives and deaths are personal to each one of their race.

An English officer, in describing the Rama's death, said that all the people wept as for a near relative, great nobles stood by the palace gates beating on their breasts, the women of his household clamored to be sacrificed on his funeral pyre and, in sign of deepest grief and humiliation, every man shaved off his beard—his honor and glory. He was secretary of legation at Oodipore, and witnessed the scenes that followed the Maharana's death. The immense antiquity of the Maharana's family and the great civilized rulers whom the Brahmins were about as the Maoris of to-day—tattooed savages—commands the respect of the Barbarians, who wisely uphold his power, and confirm to the Hindu race, embazoned on the Maharana's standard.

The passion for freedom which has for thousands of years ruled this tribe is an extraordinary tribute to the Aryan race. White blood, by the law

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was quite as well born and well known as any prince of a reigning family in Europe, though he was poor. Poverty does not affect pedigree in Asia—it might not affect it anywhere. In India they say: A Brahmin beggar is higher and greater than a Sultan reigning; so loyal and logical are they in the matter, so true to their order born after his father's death, Mohammed was sent out to live for five years in the desert with the Sons of Saad. Hallima, his foster-mother, took him to her own tribe and kept him there, till, feeling he had outlived the foster care, he most regretfully to Amima, his mother. He must have been loved by his tribe, for thirty years later, he pardoned when he was an old man, and made them, made them choose honors and goods at their will, at the appeal of his foster-father, and enriched Hallima above them all. Here is broad that he had a good and grateful heart to begin with. After a visit to Medina (that he recalled fifty years later perfectly, so intensely did he enjoy it) with his mother, she died, and the poor little fellow was left to the care of his grandfather, Abdul Malik.

He, too, soon passed away, and with him all power in Mecca went to another branch of the Korish. A wealthy uncle, Abu Talib, adopted him then, fought for him all his life, loved him dearly, and died imploring his kinsmen to protect Mohammed. With this uncle he lived in Syria, a Christian country, and was present at an annual Jewish fair, which all the Arab tribes attended. Indeed, he recalled the Koran how he heard the Syrian Bishop Koss "eloquently preach." Quarrels and fights for power having arisen among the Korish, the heads of four subtribes met, set Mohammed in their midst, and swore to assert and maintain his claim to the chieftainship "while there was a drop of water in the ocean." Mohammed, after a life, said that not for the best camel in Arabia would he give up that memory of his kinsmen's loyalty and of being admitted by right of birth to their councils. Until he was twenty-five he tended their sheep—an honorable employment in Arabia, as in Judea—for Mohammed, as for David, an interlude in life, between great stepping-stones toward great deeds and world-wide renown. He was described as singularly free from vice of any kind, extremely lovable, "of a royal sweetness, very remarkably handsome, and intensely thoughtful, the power of melancholy." His uncle, then, changed all his life at a stroke by asking him to take charge of a caravan about to be dispatched to Syria, beyond the Jordan, by Khadijah, a wealthy widow of their house. He transacted this business profitably and successfully, and so charmed the eye of the caravan that when he got back Mohammed was implored to present himself to Khadijah and tell of the journey. Khadijah, like Helen of Troy, was forty (no woman is perfectly beautiful until she is that) and beautiful. She fell deeply in love with Mohammed, got her father's consent, which he was not so ready to give, and they were married. He bore her six children, and made him perfectly happy for thirty years. Set among the rich and great of Mecca, had Mohammed been in ordinary life, the world would never have heard from him again. He would have lived and died a prosperous landowner and chief of the Korish. Instead, he spent nearly all his time wandering among the mountains, meditating, and took complete possession of his mind, and became a perfect horror of idleness, a strong, vivid belief in one true, absolute deity, and determined his whole future.

In Mecca. After brooding for several months in solitude on the tops of the hills in range, Mohammed became convinced that he was meant to be the messenger of the Most High, and was intended to preach the "One God" to all mankind. How far the councils and conversation of the Jewish tribes, by whom he had been surrounded all his life in Arabia, had influenced him, we cannot say, a Christian monk, had affected his point of view, one can only idly speculate. Probably, though, very greatly, for the Jews were the only people who had not been converted to the abhorred idolatry, and Mohammed had one acute, intellectual Greek friend whom he eventually converted. From that time on, in good fortune and in evil, Mohammed never for one moment varied or changed his creed. "There is but one God, I am the sent of God." Years afterwards, lying hidden in a cave with his friend, Abu Bekr, while his enemies' footsteps could be heard all about him, he said to him calmly: "We are but two; but God is the third." When a great Arabian tribe offered him a reward of three hundred camels if he would allow its chief some authority still, he calmly replied: "Not one green date." It is a curious and significant fact that Mohammed, his wife, Ali, his nephew, and Zeid, his freedman, believed in him with all their souls, loved him with all their hearts, treasured up his every word, suffered for him and with him, for twenty years every sort of disaster, and always at the end of his divine mission—the three things which best knew him and lived nearest to him. When he was forty-four (A. D. 611) he announced to contemptuous Meccans that God had made him Prophet of a Faith: that they must overthrow Ozza and all the idols of Mecca, and that he was hereditary guardian of their rank and offices; no longer take the rich tribute of the tribes, or the gains of the camel trade, but contented with anything for himself, most self-denying, wonderfully patient, fond of children, respectful to women, and to his followers so generous, kind and sympathetic that they were all devoted to him, and counted nothing a sacrifice that they could do for him. His great aim, his mission, was to save his people from the degradation of idolatry, and to lead them to the true faith of Allah. His personal power over men was amazing. An infinitesimal made his manner grave, dignified, gentle; his intellect was of the first order; every sense, his heart, kept what these gained, and his urbanity and consideration for the meanness of his enemies were that of the most modest and the greatest. So Arabian men were as clay in the hands of the potter when Mohammed spoke or acted. His hands were never raised in anger, his face never set in a frown, his words were of fixed and noble convictions and purpose behind him when he rode into Medina, "in all things full of the Oriental ideal of kindly faith, and of amazing strength; his cheek still ruddy, his beard falling in waves to his waist, his manner almost feminine in grace, his eyes of a deep, dark, mandarin blue, his hair of a golden brown, his gait that of one who springs ascends a hill." The whole population turned out to see the man who was to lead them to the true faith—couldn't break, nor change, nor conquer. This happened on a Friday—so that day was henceforward set apart for public worship throughout the Moslem world. He was riding his camel, Al Caswah, and he threw the reins over her neck and bade her seek her resting place. The camel stopped in an open courtyard, and Mohammed dismounted and marked out the site for his first house, and the mosque in which devout pilgrims still worship. For twelve years he tried to reach Mecca by force, but was repulsed, and orderly administration. He proclaimed Mecca a holy city. He chose the month Ramadan for fasting. He called his people to the "Bilal," ascend to the top of a lofty house and cry aloud at appointed times: "Prayer is better than sleep! Prayer is better than sleep! Prayer is better than sleep!" and to his devotees to-day; and in Asia, even Alexander the Great is an unknown personage compared with Bilal, as soon as the mosque was built that Mohammed commanded erected, the Protestant open-air preachers' great original schismatics, and the mastery of Arabia was not to be won, as he preferred it to be, by sheer weight of argument, but by the force of his example, and by the sword and began a most remarkable series of forays. Nearly all of them brought him wealth, reputation and converts. But when he failed to conquer Mecca, he stood his ground and alone planned and directed fresh operations. Absolute master of the situation, as

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but he never abated his pretensions, nor altered his creed, nor gave up his plans, nor grew impatient, nor despaired of success, and he gained converts and followers and friends at every step and held them all his life. He claimed the most unbounded authority, and the most implicit obedience, and then thousands, and eventually millions of men, he was persecuted by the Korish, chased out of Mecca, as well as Mecca, his followers were assaulted, overwhelmed, dispersed, disbanded over and over again, but he never gave up. His faith, his courage, never failed him, even when broken in health, all his patrimony, his followers, dismayed and panic-stricken, he left behind him, and he said: "Thy anger, alone, O Lord I dread," and forthwith began again to preach, teach, organize fresh recruits, make new converts. Eight years of this life had for all result the flight of the Prophet, June 22, 622, with his family and a few followers from the city in which he had lived, to the town of Medina, a population of the earth computes time from the Hegira. Doesn't all this sound like a romance? He is described as the gentlest, most modest, most self-denying, wonderfully patient, fond of children, respectful to women, and to his followers so generous, kind and sympathetic that they were all devoted to him, and counted nothing a sacrifice that they could do for him. His great aim, his mission, was to save his people from the degradation of idolatry, and to lead them to the true faith of Allah. His personal power over men was amazing. An infinitesimal made his manner grave, dignified, gentle; his intellect was of the first order; every sense, his heart, kept what these gained, and his urbanity and consideration for the meanness of his enemies were that of the most modest and the greatest. So Arabian men were as clay in the hands of the potter when Mohammed spoke or acted. His hands were never raised in anger, his face never set in a frown, his words were of fixed and noble convictions and purpose behind him when he rode into Medina, "in all things full of the Oriental ideal of kindly faith, and of amazing strength; his cheek still ruddy, his beard falling in waves to his waist, his manner almost feminine in grace, his eyes of a deep, dark, mandarin blue, his hair of a golden brown, his gait that of one who springs ascends a hill." The whole population turned out to see the man who was to lead them to the true faith—couldn't break, nor change, nor conquer. This happened on a Friday—so that day was henceforward set apart for public worship throughout the Moslem world. He was riding his camel, Al Caswah, and he threw the reins over her neck and bade her seek her resting place. The camel stopped in an open courtyard, and Mohammed dismounted and marked out the site for his first house, and the mosque in which devout pilgrims still worship. For twelve years he tried to reach Mecca by force, but was repulsed, and orderly administration. He proclaimed Mecca a holy city. He chose the month Ramadan for fasting. He called his people to the "Bilal," ascend to the top of a lofty house and cry aloud at appointed times: "Prayer is better than sleep! Prayer is better than sleep! Prayer is better than sleep!" and to his devotees to-day; and in Asia, even Alexander the Great is an unknown personage compared with Bilal, as soon as the mosque was built that Mohammed commanded erected, the Protestant open-air preachers' great original schismatics, and the mastery of Arabia was not to be won, as he preferred it to be, by sheer weight of argument, but by the force of his example, and by the sword and began a most remarkable series of forays. Nearly all of them brought him wealth, reputation and converts. But when he failed to conquer Mecca, he stood his ground and alone planned and directed fresh operations. Absolute master of the situation, as

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Frances Courtenay Baylor

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